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REVIEW OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS*

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Review of conclusions and recommendations of previous meetings

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Since the first African Population Conference convened in Accra in 1971, a number of other meetings on population issues have taken place. Among these are: the World Population Conference (1974), the Lusaka Consultation (1975), the Second and Third Conferences of African Demographers (1974 and 1979), the Joint Conferences of African Planners Statisticians and Demographers (1980 and 1982), the meetings of the Council of Ministers and Heads of State and Government which adopted the Monrovia strategy and the Lagos Plan of Action (1980).

2. This paper reviews mainly the conclusions and recommendations of the two meetings, i.e. the First African Population Conference and the Lusaka Consultation, as these two meetings relate to the Second African Population Conference, (APC 2) in the framework of the mandate given to them by the United Nations. The convening of this conference has been made possible by a generous grant from UNFPA which has financed the participation of Government delegates and other costs involved in its organization. Assistance from the host Government has contributed significantly to the success of this Conference.

3. Recommendations and conclusions of the other meetings mentioned above will be summarised and presented as they relate to specific issues of interest to African population.

4. All these meetings have reviewed population activities and produced or inspired national subregional and/or regional programmes.

II. FIRST AFRICAN POPULATION CONFERENCE

5. The First African Population Conference met in Accra, Ghana, from 9 to 18 December 1971. It was attended by about 400 participants including representatives from 32 member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. During its 12 plenary sessions and five special sessions, the Conference examined various topics. It may be of interest to review its main conclusions.

Fertility

6. The average crude birth rate was estimated at 47 per thousand; it was expected to start declining in the mid-80's and to reach about 38 per thousand by the end of the century. The gross reproduction rate was expected to start declining some five years later, but less than in other developing areas in the world. Among factors influencing fertility, social values, including improving the social status of women resulting from better education and increased participation in employment, patterns of marriage and polygamy were reviewed. Consideration was also given to the incidence of lower fertility and sterility particularly in Central Africa.

Mortality

7. The crude death rate averaged 19 per thousand in the early seventies. It was expected to decline, but still to present a lag of five points behind that of the developing countries. Life expectancy was about 45 years with the perspective of continuous improvement to the level of 58.5 years in 1995-2000.

Spatial distribution and migration

8. Population redistribution was perceived as a response to factors like internal adjustment to growing population, i.e. new settlements, provision of road links, markets, colonization of new areas and urbanization. The sedentarization of nomads was also noticed in some countries. Urbanization was expected to increase from 13 per cent in 1960 to 28 per cent by the year 2000.

9. Migration was seen as a continuation of a process resulting from the rapid natural increase and the differential distribution of resources, amenities, job opportunities, etc.

10. International migration was influenced by economic, social and political conditions in the receiving and sending countries. Seasonal labour movements have also been taking place in some areas.

Data collection and use

11. The collection, analysis and presentation of demographic data for use by planners and administrators was considered. Attention was drawn to the importance of these activities. A technical review was made of the various sources of data, including census, civil registration, demographic and non-demographic surveys with a demographic content like agricultural and other inquiries.

12. The Conference defined a very minimum package of information necessary for social and economic planning and recommended that priority should be given to it. The Conference also noted that "the task of the collector and user of demographic data must necessarily be one of getting the maximum return from the minimum of expenditure and effort"[1/].

13. The application of demography in planning for economic development was discussed at length. The meeting reviewed the role of demography in important sectors like health, education, land use, agriculture and food supply, industrialization, labour force resettlement and urbanization, housing and community development. For each of these sectors, it was found necessary to develop a suitable framework for analysis and interpretation of data, due account being taken of dynamic processes taking place in society and of the relationship between existing types of sectoral organization and the prevailing economic and social conditions.

1/ E/CN.14/562 - 14 July 1972, para. 102.

Population policies and programmes

14. The discussion focussed mainly on spatial distribution. Africa was found to be "still largely underpopulated"[2/]. Serious problems of over-population, when noticed, were due, according to the meeting, "to problems of maldistribution and the persistence of archaic systems of land ownership". The phrase "population control" was rejected as negative. Family planning was seen rather as a matter of concern for individuals, governments being called for a "more lively awareness of the relation of population and economic growth and the need to appreciate at all time, the mutual interdependence of these two critical variables in their efforts at national development"[3/].

Training and research

15. The conference examined the demographic training and research needs for Africa. The conference welcomed the establishment of the UN sponsored institutes for training and research which were being established at that time in Accra and Yaounde to serve respectively the English and the French-speaking countries. It called for the need to review population research related to African situations and to carry out "problem-oriented" research in demography.

16. During the special sessions, the conference discussed methods of population projections, techniques of family planning and evaluation, methods of analyses of limited and defective data, methods of manpower calculations and data processing. The conference came up with valuable indications, which served as reference to African planners and demographers later.

III: LUSAKA CONSULTATION

17. The World Population Plan of Action adopted in 1974 at the World Population Conference, was of global nature, with no differentiated objectives by region. Therefore, regional consultations become necessary to indicate priorities in action programmes to guide policy makers, planners and other experts, as well as donors for continued and increasing support. The African region consultation was held in Lusaka, Zambia 16 to 22 April 1975. Other regions convened also similar meetings.

18. The consultation reviewed the conclusions of the World Population Conference and their relations to other international strategies. It discussed proposals for a population programme of action for Africa, its implementation and national, regional and international co-operation and co-ordination.

19. In line with paragraphs 68-70 of the WPPA, the consultation was of the view that "economic and social development had a significant bearing on the solution of population problems"[4/]. Reference to certain international strategies was made, especially to the new economic order, as advocated by the sixth special session of the United Nations General Assembly (May 1974).

2/ E/CN.14/562 - 14 July 1972, para. 24.

3/ E/CN.14/562 - 14 July 1972, para. 227.

4/ E/CN.14/POP/136 - 7 August 1975, para. 25.

20. In addition, the consultation referred to several aspects of the economic and social development as spelled out in its final report[5/].

21. It was noted that a "strategy for development should define the effect of population size, structure, growth and distribution on sustained economic and social development" and that African countries were characterized by an "unequal socio-economic development" due to historical reasons and to "lack of equity in international economic relations".

22. Furthermore, the consultation identified factors influencing development, like availability of investment capital, level ad pattern of income distribution, cost of living and ability of the economy to generate domestic savings. Therefore, the consultation urged the African governments to generate higher rates of economic growth and to equitably share the "fruits of that growth".

23. Moreover, several aspects of planning received due consideration, ranging from establishing and/or strengthening national and subnational machinery, reviewing the content and methodology of the plans in order to integrate properly populations variables in these plans, ensuring the participation of concerned segments of population, specially the women, in the process of planning.

24. It was recognized that measures were being promoted to achieve a desired optimum population size and a population structure with a larger proportion of economically active age group.

25. The consultation discussed broadly the ways and means of reducing mortality and morbidity and improving health programmes, which ought to be more preventive than curative, and reach the majority of the population. The meeting also stressed the role of improved food and nutrition in influencing morbidity and mortality.

26. Family formation and reproduction were discussed by the meeting. It was felt that cultural values and practices in Africa, if correctly interpreted, could, along with population education and family life education, help to solve marital problems, introduce principles of responsible parenthood and overcome some negative attitudes towards the status, the role and rights of women in society.

27. Family life education was also recommended in order to prevent unwanted pregnancies and illegal abortion. The latter was also very much opposed, even on eugenic grounds, although it was admitted that "it might be necessary for qualified medical personnel to interrupt pregnancies on ground of health, and where the survival of either mother or child or both was threatened".

28. On population distribution, rural-urban migration and international migration, the consultation assessed the situation as best as it could be, given the information available on the matter. It discussed some of the explaining factors; lack of employment opportunities, irrelevant orientation

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5/ E/CN.14/POP/136 - 7 August 1975; para. 27-83.

of school curricula, etc... The meeting proposed some corrective programmes for consideration, like regional planning, decentralization of investments, intensification and diversification of the agriculture sector, legislation aimed at utilizing migration as a development instrument. An appeal was made to resolve the problem of brain drain and prevent it.

IV: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WPPA

29. As stated in paragraphs 107 to 109 of the WPPA, the UN Secretary General was invited to review the implementation of the plan and appraise the progress made to achieve the goals and recommendations of the Plan of Action.

30. In that respect, three inquiries among governments have been undertaken in 1976, 1978 and 1982. The responses to these inquiries have been very useful to assess the implementation of the Plan. All African governments tried their best to respond to the inquiries, but in some cases the responses did not reach the UN secretariat on time. Therefore the picture given by the replies, received so far, may not give an accurate picture for the whole region. However, some trends are revealed by existing information which derive from several sources, in particular from the biennial reviews of world population trends and policies, conducted by the UN secretariat.

Principles and objectives of the plan

31. The principles and objectives of the WPPA have been taken care of by the African governments, as it appears in the context of their development plans, in several national and regional declarations and in the legislation aimed at improving the well-being of African societies.

Recommendations for action

32. Population growth: African population has grown at a higher rate than indicated by the WPPA. Declining mortality and sustained fertility explain this trend. Moreover improvement in enumeration have in some cases shown higher population figures, than expected. It was obvious from the inception of the plan that policies aimed at lowering the growth rate would have almost no impact in such short period of time given the age composition of the population and its dynamics.

Morbidity and mortality

33. It is recognized that efforts have been devoted by African governments to improve the health services and the health conditions of their peoples. The result of such efforts is revealed by the decrease of mortality rates, including the infant mortality rate and the increase of the life expectation. Although, current observations indicate that the objective of the world plan to increase this expectation of life by 28 years by the year 2000 may not be reached, a decline of this variable has been recorded. It is to be recalled that the plan's target for the world as a whole was an expectation of life of 74 years by the year 2000.

34. Nevertheless, it is felt generally that more efforts should still be devoted in Africa to combat infant mortality, which is among the highest recorded around the world.

Reproduction, family formation and the status of women

35. In African countries with prevailing subfecundity and involuntary sterility and/or inadequate health facilities, an increase in fertility was perceived as beneficial. Concerned governments have been looking towards increasing fertility to a higher level.

36. Some African countries have developed family planning programmes as independent institutions, or as part of the maternal and child health care. Only few countries have passed legislation allowing abortion.

37. More broadly the protection of the family and the integration of women into the development process, by giving them more opportunities for education, training and re-employment have been given due consideration by the policy makers.

Population distribution and migration

38. Urbanization all over Africa has continued to develop at a rapid pace. Metropolitan areas and capitals have been growing faster than secondary cities or small townships, as a result of the natural increase and the inflow of migrants to cities.

39. Because of the paucity of infrastructure in the mid-seventies and the need to design modern cities to perform their duty or even to build new towns, the investments involved are of such magnitude that only few countries succeeded to monitor the urbanization process.

40. The plan calls for "co-ordinated policies relating to the absorptive capacity of urban centres, as well as policies aimed at eliminating the undesirable consequences of excessive migration". It is known that it has not been possible, everywhere, to implement this action. Rural to urban migration appears now as a more complex phenomenon than expected.

41. International migration and the increasing number of refugees in Africa have been preoccupying the governments for the last ten years. With the economic recession in the world, the tendency has been for the traditionally attracting countries to slow down or even stop the flow of migrant workers, if not to encourage them to return home. In this case the sending countries found themselves in a difficult position, because they were not ready to welcome the migrants and to provide facilities for their reinstatement. But in most cases, migrants have been accepted by the host countries.

Socio-economic policies

42. The perception of population problems and promotion of policies in the African region stems from various national and international sources. The latest assessment was made by the UN Population Division in November 1981 6/.

43. A common feature to African governments is the increasing awareness of population problems. However, given the diversity of cultures in Africa, the position vary from one to the other, depending on several factors, like size, location, availability of natural resources, population, etc. More and more African governments have initiated institutional arrangements to deal specifically with population issues, like Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Togo, Tunisia, to give few examples. The mechanisms, which have been often established at a high governmental level, include in the mandate the information of family planning.

44. Socio-economic policies have generally tended, in the past ten years, to agree with the WPPA which "recognizes that economic and social development is a central factor in the solution of population problems" 7/. But the recommendations of the plan in that respect, have been diversely followed, given the startling level of poverty of some countries listed among the least developed, the dependency of most African economies, which underwent the economic recession of the late 70's early 80's more severely than the developed economies, the postponement of implementation of big investment projects in infrastructure, agriculture and industry. Therefore, African countries are anxious to see the economic recovery taking place and some of the negative effects of the recession be corrected.

45. Many governments have insisted on the need for the improvement of knowledge of population variables and their interrelationships with socio-economic factors. Some have indicated that population growth and structure will certainly hamper development in the long-term and therefore action should be taken to reach a desirable size and structure of population.

46. Family planning has been promoted for several reasons, as a means of reducing fertility, protecting the health of the mother and child, helping to create an equilibrium between population and other resources, etc. Increasing the age at first marriage has been also identified as a policy for reducing fertility. But abortion and sterilization have not been considered as positive methods for reducing it. Their acceptance has been very limited.

47. Reduction of mortality was universally desired. But apparently attention was not sufficiently given to the indirect relationship between the decrease in infant and childhood mortality and a decreasing fertility.

48. Population distribution was generally found to be unsatisfactory, but, relevant policies to balance it effectively did not perform to the expected levels because of the costs involved and complex constraints.

6/ Population policy briefs - ESA/P/W/67/Rev.1, 2 June 1982.

7/ WPPA para. 68.

49. Furthermore it was the view of some governments that the solution of the problems of underdevelopment will result in the solution of population problems. The idea of tackling population issues at the same time seemed to become more popular among African governments.

Promotion of knowledge and policies

50. Data collection and analysis have been of primary concern to African countries. The African census programme has given opportunity to many countries to conduct a census and use its data for the first time. As a consequence of it, governments came to realize the importance of population in the process of development.

Research

51. With the increasing availability of data, of highly trained Africans and of awareness among policy makers, research on population in Africa has received a boost in national institutions like universities and research centres, multinational and international organizations, like Sahel Institute, RIPS, IFORD, ECA, ...

52. Research has dealt with many fields ranging from fertility to infant and childhood mortality, family formation, population distribution, migration etc.

53. Improved knowledge and understanding of relationship between population variables has been hampered by the lack of data, which itself has created the need for the setting up of appropriate methodologies and field surveys. The progress achieved so far can be measured in the increasing demand for analysis of data and for a better integration of population variables in the development plans.

54. The inception of the African census programme in 1971 has permitted a significant progress in Africa. Twenty-two countries undertook their census for the first time. Generally the programme contributed significantly to the development of statistical infrastructures and to increasing confidence in direct data collection operations.

55. Furthermore, Africa has largely benefited from research promoted by the international community as a whole from the active participation of African scholars in different meetings and fora and from a growing list of their publications.

Management, training, education and information

56. The plan recognized the importance of these activities in the field of population. Training and education received some support at the national and the regional level. A particular effort has been devoted by the UN sponsored institutes, RIPS, IFORD and CDC to meet the needs of African countries in training high level experts in population. These institutes have also provided assistance for the middle level training to some countries in the region.

57. Training in management of population programmés has been undertaken in some countries, but no attempt has been yet made to introduce a subregional or regional programme to meet the needs of African countries.

58. Education and information in population have been developed by UNESCO and FAO in the region and training in labour communities has been promoted by ILO:

Development and evaluation of population policies

59. The plan suggested the creation of population units within the national planning machineries and the integration of population measures and programmes into comprehensive social and economic plans and programmes.

60. Although the establishment of such units has not been generalized, it is worth noting that some member States have initiated the creation of such units, with the assistance, in some cases, of ECA, ILO and other agencies.

61. The integration of population variables in development planning has appeared to be a more complex process. It was hampered by the lack of basic demographic data in many African countries. However, the situation which characterized the last decade showed noticeable progress compared to the previous one. The organization of national seminars, training workshop and the production of case studies, among other activities, have had a powerful training effect at the national levels.

V. OTHER MEETINGS

Third Conference of African Demographers and First and Second Joint Conferences of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers.

62. As statutory bodies of ECA these meetings have been entrusted with the mandate to report to the Conference of Ministers on the population activities (Third Conference and Demographic Committee of the Joint Conference) and to submit recommendations and resolutions. They review demographic trends in Africa, their implications for policy making and planning, assess progress achieved in population and recommend lines of action and priorities.

63. The Third Conference of African Demographers noted that "because of rapid population growth rates, efforts by African countries to implement educational, health and employment programmes had fallen far below anticipated targets 8/. It also expressed concern about the high rates of both fertility and mortality in some countries and low fertility in some others. International migration was not found to play a major role in population growth, excepting few countries.

64. The conference discussed the African census programme which ended successfully in 1977 and was followed by the African Household Survey Capability Programme. The African participation in the World Fertility Survey was also discussed.

8/ E/CN.14/178 para. 28

65. In 1980, the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers was established to replace the former individual conferences of planners, statisticians and demographers. The first session of the Joint conference reviewed the development perspectives of Africa in the framework of the third United Nations Development Decade. It assessed the progress achieved in the implementation of the African National Household Survey Capability Programme and World Fertility Survey. It requested the establishment of a programme for Comparative Analysis of Fertility. It also noted the decentralization of the UN training institutes, IFORD and RIPS, to ECA and drafted new statutes for them.

66. The second session of the Joint Conference went on further to consider the implementation of the Lagos Plan of Action. The meeting discussed the use of population data in development planning, the measurement and analysis of poverty in African countries. It reviewed the ongoing programmes (ANHCP and WFS).

Monrovia Strategy and Lagos Plan of Action

67. Moreover, the African governments adopted the Monrovia strategy, the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos, which constitute the first African attempt to design an overall and specific strategy for Africa up to the year 2000. Recommendations on Population of the Monrovia Strategy and the Lagos Plan of Action will be briefly described..

68. These two documents constitute an important base for the economic and social development of Africa during the next years. Both of them take into consideration the population factor and stress its importance.

69. The Monrovia Strategy 9/ took account of:

- The high rate of population growth in many African countries;
- The rapid rate of uncontrolled urbanization;
- The high levels of mortality and fertility;
- The existing gap in meeting the needs of large groups for health, education, shelter, food, employment, etc.;
- The imbalance in opportunities for the development and application of latent capabilities in the population of women and the young.

70. The Lagos Plan of Action was adopted by the African Heads of State and government in Lagos, in April 1980. The Plan sets up long-term goals to be achieved for the overall development of the continent. This action requires increased individual and collective selfreliance, mobilization of human and material resources and political determination.

9/ E/CN.14/INF/107 Rev. 1, page 10.

71. In the field of population, the Lagos Plan of Action calls for an appropriate machinery to be established in order to "ensure greater integration of population variables in development planning"10/. Collection and analysis of demographic data as well as training of nationals should be given more importance.

72. Furtehrmore the Lagos Plan of Action expresses concern about "the excessive rural-urban migration". It calls for a planned distribution and redistribution of population in relation with human settlements and integrated rural development schemes.

73. The same preoccupation is noted regarding the high levels of fertility and mortality. The implications of the rapid population growth are matched with the ability to meet the "needs of the majority of population" 11/.

74. More broadly population problems are posed in terms of "quality of life". In other words any measure or policy when promoted should be assessed by using this criterion. In that respect the concept of family is stressed. The plan states that improving the quality of life "should stand on a firm knowledge base that cover the most important social, economic and demographic factors related to the family 12/.

75. Finally the Plan suggested some topics on which research should be encouraged. These are: population characteristics and their perception, socio-economic and cultural factors in relation to population, population related concepts, communication, family and values, government's role in population matters.

Concluding remarks

76. Through the review of conclusions and recommendations from various meetings, it appears that African officials and policy-makers have become more aware of the implications of population in the process of socio-economic development.

10/ L.P.A. para. 348.

11/ Ibid para. 453.

12/ L.P.A. para. 354.

77. Some efforts have been devoted to improve the overall conditions of the peoples. A decline in mortality has been noticed. However, its level is still so high that a sustained effort will be still required, in order to achieve the goals of the WPPA.

78. High fertility and in some cases low fertility or infertility are matters of concern to governments. Proper measures are sought for the regulation of this parameter, in line with development objectives.

79. The problems of population distribution, migration and growing urbanization have been perceived long ago. But as they become more difficult to solve with time, African countries feel more and more concerned about finding pertinent solutions to them.

80. Efforts have been devoted to improve knowledge of population variables. Progress has been achieved almost in every country in co-ordinating censuses and demographic surveys and in promoting civil registration. Data processing and analyses have equally been promoted. However, given the complexity of the interrelationship between population and the overall process of development, these efforts need to be sustained and more resources are needed to consolidate what has been achieved and to progress further.

81. Side by side with progress in data analyses and interpretation, there have been marked improvement in the utilization of demographic variables in development planning.